

Charles Weber, Jr., “Bronxville’s First Store,” and the Babe

By Ray Geselbracht

Charles Weber, Jr. deserves an honored place in Bronxville’s history for two reasons.

First, he ran a two-generation Bronxville business for almost fifty years. His father moved what had been his meat business in Mount Vernon to Bronxville in about 1903,



setting it up in the new Arcade Block, the Village’s first important commercial building. Weber said his place was, as his letterhead proclaimed, “Bronxville’s first store.” He called his store The Arcade market, though Villagers probably also called it simply Weber’s, or, after Charles, Jr. became a partner in the business in 1924, “Chas. Weber & Son.”

Charles, Jr. retired in 1969. The Weber’s market was possibly Bronxville’s best known family run business, and the one with the longest record of service. Everyone in Bronxville knew of Weber’s, and a great many Village residents bought their meat there during the store’s sixty-seven-year run.

Weber also deserves to be remembered as the man who, in an extraordinary way, brought baseball to Bronxville. Sometime in the mid-1930s, Weber was introduced to Babe Ruth at a sports writers dinner. They quickly became friends and remained close for the rest of Ruth’s life. “It was mainly baseball talk,” Weber later remembered. “He loved to listen and I loved to talk.” Weber was a devoted baseball fan who claimed he never missed a Yankees or a Giants game. Ruth, who lived in Manhattan, came often up to Westchester County to visit with friends. When asked by a Mount Vernon reporter why he came to that city so often, Ruth said, “The people here are nice. It’s one of the few places I ever visited regularly and was treated just like one of the boys.” He was often one of the boys at gatherings in the back room of Weber’s Bronxville market. He attracted a following, and other baseball figures made their way to the market. Weber, who loved company and cooking up some good food, lighting up a few cigars, and engaging in high-spirited conversation and storytelling, welcomed everyone who showed up. These included National League president Ford Frick, a long-time Bronxville resident, and Bill Terry, the last National League player to hit over .400 in a season; Mel Allen, the play-by-play announcer for the Yankees from the 1940s to the

1960s, was also a regular, and Lou Gehrig or Carl Hubell might show up. Similar gatherings also occurred after Yankee games at Daubie's restaurant on 161st Street in the Bronx.

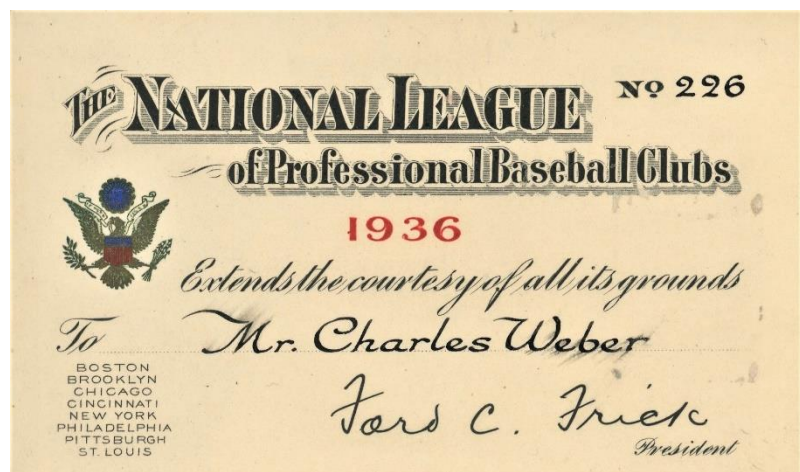
Weber, Ruth, and Ford Frick, not long before Ruth's death in 1948.



Weber and Ruth also shared an interest in hunting, and for a few years at the end of his life, Ruth enjoyed to spend weekends relaxing and hunting at Weber's cattle farm up the Hudson, near Albany. The two men also enjoyed bowling together, and they once offered to buy the Bronxville bowling alley on Milburn Street.

When Ruth died in 1948, Weber lost a good friend and Bronxville lost a vital and colorful figure who for several years helped make the Village a center of the baseball world.

This pass, signed by Weber's friend Ford Frick, gave him free entry into any National League ball game.



*Charles Weber,
Jr. may be the
driver of the
store truck in
this photograph.*

